

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. BUNDY

July 15, 1961

SUBJECT: Some Observations Regarding the Call-up of Reserves

1. I am somewhat uneasy about the proposals for a substantial call-up of reserves and the declaration of a national emergency. I wonder whether these steps should be taken without a further study of an alternative means of building the required strength.

2. The rationale for the call-up of reserves and the declaration of a national emergency seems to go as follows: (a) We need an increase of six divisions by a certain target date (presumably to conduct non-nuclear operations in Central Europe); (b) This figure cannot be reached without a call-up of reserves; and (c) Reserves cannot be called without a declaration of national emergency.

3. I agree that our readiness must be improved substantially. However, in order to determine the most useful immediate step, the purposes of the proposed build-up should be clarified. Three spring to mind: (a) an improvement in our overall posture; (b) meeting a specific crisis date; and (c) impressing the Soviets with our determination.

4. My view is that at this stage the major emphasis should be on measures which can be sustained for a long time. Declaring a national emergency and calling up reserves gives a psychological advantage to the Soviets. If they relax pressures for a while or if they build up the crisis very slowly there will be a clamor to release the reserves. We could then become prisoners of our mobilization schedule. And I would consider prolonged tension more likely than a show-down followed by a clear-cut denouement.

5. It seems to me also that the Soviets will be most impressed by a general improvement in our readiness rather than by any single dramatic gesture. The latter has the additional disadvantage of perhaps making us appear unnecessarily bellicose, perhaps even hysterical. Finally, if we declare an emergency now, we will have used up a measure which might be much more effective if taken as a response to a more clear-cut Soviet provocation.

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6. The present plan calls for a crash program for the new divisions to be ready starting January 1. The Defense Department view seems to be that reservists are required to create the new divisions. General Lemnitzer mentioned that divisions composed of draftees would take 10-12 months before being ready.

7. This may be true. However, in World War II, soldiers were sent into combat with only 13 weeks of basic training. The reserve units with which I am familiar do not strike me as too impressive. Moreover, if we drastically increased draft calls immediately several divisions should be well advanced in training by early next year. This would enable us to send the present strategic reserve overseas with the prospect that a new reserve was in the process of being formed. If we follow this course, the reserves would be called in only after other preparatory measures have been taken and an actual confrontation seems much more imminent.

8. Before committing ourselves to a declaration of an emergency and a call-up of reserves I would suggest that the Defense Department be requested to submit a plan for a substantial, urgent build-up which does not require these measures. The Defense Department should be asked to develop a schedule for creating new divisions by filling out STRAF, increasing draft calls, and of course increasing appropriations. Only if this proves not feasible should the more drastic steps be taken. The Defense Department should be asked to submit this plan even if it believes that this is not the optimum mobilization schedule. This would enable the President to make his decision in full awareness of the available alternatives.

9. The build-up should not be justified by the Berlin crisis but by general Soviet belligerence. The build-up in Europe should be urged on the basis of MC-70 rather than the Berlin crisis alone -- in other words, as a gesture which is desirable in itself. This will enable NATO to face a prolonged crisis more easily.

10. Side by side with our build-up it seems to me important to study the following types of disarmament schemes: (a) unilateral measures so that our build-up does not produce unintended war; (b) measures to enable both sides to back off from the brink of nuclear war -- i.e., "crash" disarmament; and (c) comprehensive schemes for European security.

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11. Though this is not the moment for a full analysis, I would like to urge a careful review of the concept of military operations now being developed. The original [redacted] was absurd. But a six division operation in Central Europe seems to me to involve the danger of erring in the opposite direction. It seems to me essential that the concept of military operations be clarified. Somebody should be assigned the role of the devil's advocate.

12. The need for a flexible nuclear response remains. [redacted]

  
Henry A. Kissinger

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